

NSC BRIEFING

8 August 1956

**THE SINO-BURMA BORDER SITUATION**

1. Press reports of a Chinese Communist "invasion" of northern Burma are greatly overcolored.

A. Actually, small Chinese Communist contingents have been occupying disputed territory in Burma's remote Wa and Kachin States (map), adjacent to undefined portions of the Burma's boundary with China, for at least the past year.

B. Definition of Sino-Burmese border has been a problem since 1886. Although Wa State section was surveyed under League of Nations auspices in 1936, Kachin State line was arbitrarily drawn by British administrators in 1906, and never accepted by any Chinese government.

C. Actually, last week's flurry of news appears to have resulted from a Burmese government publicity plant, which the government is now playing down.

D. In a carefully-worded communique on 31 July, Rangoon sought to play down the seriousness of the situation. Premier Ba Swe, on 7 Aug., followed up with a public statement emphasizing "cordial" Sino-Burmese relations, and stating he had "every hope" for an amicable settlement.

2. There is no doubt, however, that the Burmese government is deeply disturbed over the China border problem, and has even had doubts about the wisdom of reopening the Burma Road.

A. Despite repeated Burmese efforts to open negotiations on the border problem, all their approaches have been brusquely rebuffed.

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B. Exasperation over these rebuffs certainly has inspired Burmese "leaks" of information to the press--in hopes of gaining by publicity what they have failed to accomplish by diplomacy.

C. Premier Ba Swe's 7 Aug. statement that Peiping has been requested to withdraw its troops from the Wa States and negotiate demarcation "of the frontier area" can be considered an overt move in this same campaign.

3. Peiping, apparently embarrassed by world-wide interest in the matter, stated its position in a 3 August broadcast--four days after the "invasion" story broke.

A. Although the Chinese Communists admitted the presence of troops in the disputed area, Peiping attacked the "American propaganda machine" for exploiting this situation in an effort to get Burma into SEATO.

4. In any negotiations with the Burmese, the Chinese Communists can be expected to be extremely sticky.

A. In this connection, US embassy Rangoon states that Burma's border claims are not altogether indisputable.

B. In any event, emergence of the border problem into the public view constitutes another brake to the development of close ties between Burma and the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

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